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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
THURSDAY, AUGUST 28, 2008

In Today's Papers

The Caucasus Crisis Polarizes the World
"The World is polarized," and "Turkey is caught in the middle" writes mainstream Milliyet. Turkish media outlets emphasize anxiety regarding an escalation of tensions in the Black Sea between NATO and Russia, with Turkey "caught in the middle." Mainstream Hurriyet reports Russian Deputy Chief of Staff Nogovitsin warned Turkey, "If U.S. and NATO warships violate the Montreaux Treaty by remaining in the Black Sea for more than twenty-one days, the primary responsibility for the violation of the treaty will rest with Turkey." Mainstream Vatan reports, "The Black Sea is Boiling," claiming "This conflict is the world's new September 11th," because "the Russian decision to recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia will have a similar ripple effect to September 11th," referring to a dramatic change in the dynamics of international politics. In "An Iron Curtain in the Caucasus," leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet writes, "from now on the region is divided into two, with NATO on one side and Russia on the other." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak carries the headline, "Russians Play Roulette in the Black Sea," and notes, "NATO is tense, while Russia seeks support from China, India, and Iran at the Shanghai Summit in Dushanbe." Mainstream Sabah's front-page reads, "NATO Defies Russian Roulette in the Black Sea." Sabah carries an article on the inside pages that reports, "An anonymous high-level U.S. official spoke to Sabah in Denver," and said, "If Turkey wants relations with NATO, then Turkey needs to act like it. It's important for Turkey to act like a real NATO ally." Meanwhile, mainstream Milliyet reports, "Turkey seeks a low profile position in this conflict," because of "implications regarding Cyprus." Milliyet quotes an anonymous Turkish diplomatic source who said, "If Turkey joins other NATO countries in harshly criticizing Russia for recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia," then, "Russia is likely to draw attention to Turkey's support for the independence of Kosovo and northern Cyprus." Another diplomatic source told Milliyet, "While Turkey was a committed NATO defender during the first Cold War," now Turkey is so dependent on Russia for energy resources that, "in the new international order, Turkish interests may not be parallel to NATO interests," and "Moscow is pleased that Turkey is feeling so much pressure."

Editorial Opinion on Caucasus

Hadi Uluengin wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "Moscow has returned to its historic roots of expansionism and does not care about starting a new Cold War. From a short term perspective, this is a gain for Moscow. The U.S. is preoccupied with Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and U.S. presidential elections, so the U.S. is unable to react strongly at this time. But in the long term, Russia is doomed to suffer because of its policy decisions. After all, Russia is still an underdeveloped country and the flow of Western technology and capital into Russia is vitally important. Once the Western world applies strict measures against Russia, the rulers of the Kremlin will suffer. Also in the long term, members of the 'Commonwealth of Independent States' will likely seek alliances with the Western community in order to counter Russia's expansionist spirit. All of these developments will move Turkey even closer to the EU."

Nejat Eslen wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "Developments in Iraq and Afghanistan have not provided the political results the United States hoped to achieve. Meanwhile, the U.S.-led revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia did not quite gel, while Russia and China continue to enjoy their strength. The current power struggle in Asian geopolitics has a multilateral character, and the consequences remain to be seen because history is being rewritten. Turkey will find itself trapped between Russia and the Western world unless Turkey quickly re-shapes its strategic relations."

Davut Dursun wrote in Islamist leaning Yeni Safak: "Territorial integrity used to be the most prominent factor guiding peaceful international relations, but this principle has been undermined by

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recent events. Certainly, the consequences of this will be very serious. The Russian Federation may face a boomerang effect because the current developments are enough to scare the CIS member countries into taking steps to protect their ethnic and cultural diversity."

Ergun Babahan wrote in mainstream Sabah: "It is a common belief that Turkey cannot be governed with the current constitution because it was written with an authoritarian perspective during a military coup. The current crisis with Russia will bring Turkey to a very important place in front of the U.S. and the EU. Despite its problems, this position offers many opportunities for Turkey. At this time, Turkey should hold on tightly to the EU process. It might be difficult to change the constitution at the moment, but it won't be that difficult to implement EU reforms one after another and strengthen Turkey's democracy. Turkey is entering a new era of opportunity and it is necessary that Turkey not miss this opportunity."

Hasan Cemal wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "Turkey should never turn its back on the EU, ever. Of course, while Turkey is gaining speed on the path to EU accession, it should at the same time consider Russia, China, the Gulf, and the Middle East. If Turkey strengthens itself in the EU, it will become stronger in the East also. And a strong Turkey in the East will strengthen Turkey's hand in the EU and the U.S. as well."

Hakan Celik wrote in mainstream tabloid Posta: "Russia is hoping for support from Asia during Russia's crisis with the West. Medvedev is trying to garner support from the members of the Shanghai Cooperation. Meanwhile, tensions are escalating in the Black Sea between the Russian and the U.S. fleets. Just a little spark can cause a big fire in the Black Sea. Turkey has managed to remain impartial so far. However, this may not be so easy if the Montreux convention is violated. Meanwhile, PM Erdogan's Caucasus Platform initiative has not been received warmly by the U.S. and the EU. As a matter of fact, the U.S. is disturbed by this initiative and Senator Lugar openly acknowledged this during his recent visit to Ankara. Despite all these negative developments, Turkey should be able to have an open line of communication with Russia. Russian FM Lavrov will come to Turkey on Monday. This visit is important in illustrating Turkey's significance in the region."

Turkish Military Farewell Ceremonies Emphasize Secularism, Unity

Milliyet, Vatan, Hurriyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal and others: Today's papers draw attention to the messages issued by the Commanders during baton passing ceremonies yesterday. Mainstream Vatan reports that the incoming Chief of General Staff General Ilker Basbug handed over the Land Forces Command to General Isik Kosaner yesterday. During his speech General Kosaner said "preserving the basic principles of the republic cannot be considered as intervention in domestic politics. The Turkish Armed Forces will keep preserving the unified nation and the secular state." Mainstream Sabah noted that General Kosaner criticized the EU by saying "The Turkish Armed Forces don't need foreign supervision." All papers note that General Kosaner highlighted the importance of international support and cooperation in fight against terrorism. Outgoing Land Forces Commander General Basbug, on his part, listed the achievements of the Turkish military in the fight against terrorism and highlighted the importance of international coordination in the fight against terrorism. Mainstream Milliyet reports out-going TGS Chief General Buyukanit told reporters, "The Montreux Convention provisions were not violated in the Black Sea. The Black Sea is a very important region for Turkey and Turkey will do its best not to endanger the stability in the Black Sea."

Gul's First Year as the President

Sabah, Zaman, Turkiye: Papers report on President Gul's interview with NTV yesterday, during which Islamist-leaning Zaman says "President Gul assessed his first year as president." Gul said

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"Turkey should not miss opportunities in regard to the EU. The EU is a process that enhances Turkey and boosts the standards of the country. That is why I attach great importance to EU reforms." Gul also noted, "The fight against terrorism is the most important issue on Turkey's agenda. We saw important developments last year regarding the fight against terrorism and I want to pay a visit to Baghdad soon." Sabah reports that President Gul said, "I have never discriminated against any citizens since I took over. The principles in the presidential oath, including impartiality, are important ideals and I believe I remained loyal to those elements."

Armenian President Invites Turkish President to Turkey-Armenia Soccer Match

Liberal-intellectual Radikal carried an exclusive interview with President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan during which Sargsyan repeated his invitation to Gul to watch the soccer match between the Turkish and Armenian national football teams on September 6. Sargsyan sees this even as an opportunity to strengthen ties between Ankara and Yerevan. Sargsyan emphasized, "Once Turkey and Armenia establish diplomatic ties, it will be possible to discuss even the difficult issues and set up commissions to deal with all of them." Regarding Turkey's initiative for a Caucasus Platform, Sargsyan noted it seemed like a positive effort and said that Yerevan will shape a stance on it as soon as receives the initiative and work on its details. Regarding the events of 1915, Armenian President said, "There is no single Armenian citizen in the world who believes that the genocide did not happen. However, we certainly do not consider the recognition of genocide as a precondition to develop relations with Turkey. That is the very reason why we seek to establish diplomatic ties with Turkey without any precondition."

Back to TL: Turkey drops 'new' from currency

All papers report the Turkish Central Bank Governor has launched a campaign for a new currency by dropping "new" from the currency's current name, "New Turkish Lira (YTL)," and reverting back to the "Turkish Lira." Governor Durmus Yilmaz said: "The new currency will start circulating as of January 1, 2009, under the name 'Turkish Lira.' The term 'New Turkish Lira' was only a tool for transition." In addition, Yilmaz said a brand new note for 200 Turkish Lira will begin to circulate. He said the new notes will be different sizes as a measure against counterfeiting and will carry features for the visually impaired. The depiction of the country's founder, Ataturk, will remain on the front face of all bank notes. He said the "Turkish Lira" will be in circulation together with the "New Turkish Lira" until the end of 2009. As of January 1, 2010, only Turkish Ziraat Bank and the Central Bank will change YTL notes with the new TL notes. Turkey started the YTL regime in 2005 after deleting six zeroes from Turkish Lira bank notes. In a related story, Yilmaz

emphasized, "The Central Bank's monetary policies have played an important role in boosting Turkish exports."

TV News:
NTV

Domestic News

Ferda Paksut said the prosecutor is interrogating her in connection with Ergenekon investigation in order to pressure her husband Osman Paksut to resign as Vice President of the Constitutional Court.

Suspects detained in connection with the recent Izmir bombing allegedly were preparing an attack during this weekend's Victory Day celebrations.

International News

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British Foreign Secretary Miliband warns Russia not to start a new Cold War.

Georgia downgrades diplomatic relations with Russia and pulls out all but two diplomats from Moscow.

In a BBC interview, Russian President Medvedev accused the U.S. of delivering weapons to Georgia under the disguise of humanitarian aid.

A 6.3 magnitude earthquake hit the southern part of Russia's Lake Baikal, causing no casualties or material damage.

WILSON